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ABSTRACT

It is proposed that art and architecture tours, commonly incorporated into coursework in English-medium European study-abroad programs for Americans, can be integrated into English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) programs using various models of content-based instruction. These tours can provide opportunities to take students out of the classroom and into the environment that is the object of study. When offered within ESL programs, courses can be both communicative and academic, address tourist-oriented needs, enrich visual arts content-based courses, and provide content-based cultural segments. The tours also provide students with a wider variety of study-abroad experiences to reflect upon, to share, and to exploit the cultural and linguistic environment. Temple University (Pennsylvania) has offered a course in Western art emphasizing major works in Philadelphia art collections and an art appreciation course introducing art, architecture, and design. Suggestions and guidelines are offered for selecting, planning, and conducting tours and for followup activities. (Contains 26 references.) (MSE)

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Visual Arts Learning Opportunities for Study Abroad Students in American ESL Programs: Focus on Tours[1]

Robert Preece

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the educational benefits of incorporating content-based/ESP visual arts classes and tours into the American ESL program curriculum for study abroad students. The article offers a wide range of practical tips on organising visual arts classes and tours.

§1 Introduction

University ESL programs that have significant numbers of study abroad students[2] in the United States seem to offer altogether different educational and cultural experiences than their study abroad counterparts in Europe. In English-medium European programs, regionally-specific course work, particularly courses dealing with art and architecture, offer teachers opportunities to take learning outside of the classroom and into the local environment. These courses have been organised in an academic framework, accommodate student travel-oriented interests, and help create a culturally rich study abroad experience (Steen 1995; Edwards 1995)[3]. (I shall refer to this as one outcome.)

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[1] This is a revised version of a paper presented at the PennTESOL-East Annual Spring Conference in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, April 29, 1995.

[2] For the purposes of this article, ESL study abroad students are characterised by their length of stay in the host country (short term: one or two semesters; long-term: pursuing a degree). For the university programs in the Philadelphia area, a significant number are study abroad students.

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ABSTRACT
This article discusses the educational benefits of incorporating content-based/ESP visual arts classes and tours into the American ESL program curriculum for study abroad students. The article offers a wide range of practical tips on organising visual arts classes and tours.

§1 Introduction

University ESL programs that have significant numbers of study abroad students[2] in the United States seem to offer altogether different educational and cultural experiences than their study abroad counterparts in Europe. In English-medium European programs, regionally-specific course work, particularly courses dealing with art and architecture, offer teachers opportunities to take learning outside of the classroom and into the local environment. These courses have been organised in an academic framework, accommodate student travel-oriented interests, and help create a culturally rich study abroad experience (Steen 1995; Edwards 1995)[3]. (I shall refer to this as one outcome.)

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While 'culture' needs not be restricted to seeing and learning about art and architecture, they are motivating factors for international travel (Kanner 1990) and study (Steen 1995). For the example of Philadelphia, in *Blue Guide World: New York, America, and the East Coast*, a Japanese tour book, the first eight sights listed are those which deal with historical sites, colonial architecture, and an art museum (Sakiya 1992). Yet, art and architecture tours, and the visual arts, are usually not incorporated into ESL programming despite their ability to provide cultural introductions to the United States and the local environment, and to also accommodate study abroad interests. If/when they are incorporated, they are often either non-academic or incomprehensible: simply seeing, or listening to a tour guide that students can't understand. (I shall refer to this as another outcome.)

In this paper, I will present the fundamental differences that create the two study abroad outcomes, outline a variety of courses and segments that lend themselves to incorporating visual arts tours, and suggest techniques for developing materials and organising these tours for ESL learners. At the end of this paper, practical tips for conducting tours are provided.

§2 Why are there two different outcomes?

The two outcomes are results of the following issues:

a. **Language backgrounds of students.** In Europe, American students can often take foreign language classes, and also content in their first language, English (Steen 1995). In the United States, students come from a variety of first language backgrounds of which English is their second language. Although study abroad experiences and tours are sometimes offered to large groups of ESL students with the same first language, for most programs, this is not possible due to departmental constraints.

b. **Program Curriculum.** Due to the language backgrounds of students, the program curricula have taken the following shapes: in Europe, a wide variety of content courses can be offered that utilise resources in

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the visual arts in the studied environment. The author studied in this program as an undergraduate student.

the local environment for which tours can be incorporated. In order to maximise tours, courses are designed that make academic and logistical sense. For example, in Rome, courses focus on things that are Italian and Roman as opposed to French or Parisian.

In the United States, while American culture has often become an integral part of ESL programming, our artistic and cultural sites have not. However, courses and segments can be created where students learn about art and architecture through an ESL framework that utilises content-based/ESP methodology. This can provide culturally-rich, communicative, and academic experience for ESL learners.

c. **Expertise of the faculty.** Because ESL students are often restricted to instruction by ESL teachers, we often act as the introducers to the studied culture. This contrasts with English-medium European programs, where content teachers with a variety of expertise interact with students. At Temple University in Rome, history, literature, art, art history, architecture, cultural studies, and sometimes business teachers offer a variety of perspectives, and they recommend or take students to various sites.

While ESL programs do not offer such a wide variety of content expertise, many teachers come from a variety of undergraduate content backgrounds and coursework, some including the visual arts. Content-based materials can be created utilising existing texts, including books, brochures, and tour guide materials. Further, as in the case of five Philadelphia institutions, there was interest on the part of museum educators and visual arts faculty for collaboration.

d. **Location of program.** Rome is one of the most popular international tourist destinations featuring art and architecture from antiquity to the present day. Further, it is centrally located in Italy, which has more than half of the world's cultural holdings as defined by UNESCO (Haberman 1990). However, the United States, with its great art collections, presents an accessible history of art from a variety of cultures across place and time, and it has been internationally recognised as a leader in art and architecture since World War II.

Undoubtedly, culturally rich urban areas in the United States have an advantage over others when it comes to choices for courses that

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emphasise tours (Schwartz 1986:71). However, many locations outside of urban areas have access to museums, university galleries, cultural sites, and historical architecture.

§3 Options and models for incorporating art and architecture tours: Courses and segments

Experiences can be offered that combine language learning and communication, academic knowledge, and art and architecture tours that will get students out of the classroom and learning about our artistic culture. The following options address the structure and objectives of ESL programs and students from the most advanced to the intermediate language levels. These options draw upon existing visual arts courses offered at the college level followed by options that fit within the ESL realm: sheltered, adjunct, content-based and ESP courses and segments which can be incorporated into existing ESL classes.

When organising the content and course around study abroad objects and tours, the issue of the cultural norms of the students becomes involved. For example, at Temple University in Philadelphia, most of our students were Asian, with other groups making up only a small fraction of the student population. Therefore, we gave as much of a cultural introduction to Western culture as to American, for the vast majority of our students.

Option 1: University-level visual arts courses

Many art history classes at schools, particularly in/near cities, offer field trips as part of the class. However, several more can often be included for the purposes of creating a more dynamic study abroad experience while obtaining class objectives.

At Temple University, entering freshmen can take classes focusing on Philadelphia area museums, histories of Western art, art appreciation, and studio art.

In the class *Philadelphia Museums*, the content briefly surveys the entire history of Western art emphasising major works in Philadelphia art collections. Six field trips are devoted to looking at real works of art while

classroom time is spent on developing a context in which these works were produced.

Meanwhile, surveys of a Western-focused history of art are usually divided into two courses: Pre-History to Renaissance and Renaissance to 20th century, with the latter conducive to approaching American art. However, some art and design schools have the following division: Pre-History to 18th century and a combined 19th and 20th century survey. Also, advanced classes sometimes offer American art and architecture or regional styles exclusively.

However the class *Visual Experience*, or *Art Appreciation*, offers perhaps the most adaptable format for incorporating tours. In this course, the purpose is usually to introduce art and architecture, sometimes design, by providing an introduction to the visual elements and principles of design, materials and techniques, a very abbreviated history, and themes concerning the visual arts as demonstrated in textbook form by Gilbert (1995), Ocvirk et al (1994), and Sayer (1994). Comparatively, as these courses de-emphasise a history of major works in lieu of the visual elements, principles of design, materials, techniques, and themes, visually-oriented tours of all kinds can be incorporated into the course and still meet content objectives[4]. Further, as history of Western art survey courses often spotlight Western and European-American art and architecture, images and exhibition spaces can be selected to provide multicultural perspectives of Americans. For course models, the content outlined in *Visual Experience* is perhaps the most multicultural-friendly with its de-emphasis upon established visual arts hierarchies.

For introductory studio classes, some offer tours which emphasise looking at works as solutions to particular problems in the creative process. In my observations, reading and writing requirements, if any at all, are often minimal for studio classes. However, speaking and listening often take on a more important role in discussions about the work that is produced by students. Yet, expectations of ESL students in studio classes varies considerably across schools, departments, and instructors.

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[4] The author has taught *Visual Experience* to native speakers.

While the purpose of taking one of these courses may be to obtain an introductory study abroad art experience, art / art history courses are also sometimes required, or fulfil a visual arts or humanities distribution requirement, for longer-term study abroad students to gain a Bachelor's degree.

Option 2: Sheltered and adjunct courses

Drawing from these existing models, sheltered and adjunct courses can be arranged that provide ESL students with a more accommodating environment, and in this context, an opportunity to expand study tours. Textbooks can be selected and materials developed that may be more accommodating to ESL students, and at the same time, meet content objectives.

While existing and sheltered art / art history courses are perhaps the easiest to set up, their applications to ESL programs is usually limited to the upper tier of advanced students, or to a large group of ESL students within the degree system. However, studio art classes, which often require far less reading and writing, if any at all, can bring in students at lower language levels.

Option 3: Content-based courses

Previously, there have been a large number of articles that deal with art and language learning. However, for most of these articles, the main objective has been to use a student's general or existing knowledge of art and artistic ability as a means of diversifying opportunities to learn and practice language. This may take the form of drawing activities that promote conversation and writing (Christison & Bassano 1982; Rathet 1994), a visual supplement to a work of literature (Bellver 1989), or using the work as a visual reference in which creative storytelling and inferencing occurs (Maley, Duff & Grellet 1991; Kirn & Hartmann 1990; Stocking 1983; Carr 1981). While these activities are helpful in order to provide variety for the ESL classroom, their applications to a content-based/ESP course are limited because little is gained in preparation for approaching or practice with sophisticated visual arts content.

However, recently there has been a greater interest in art within a content-based context fuelled by the increased popularity of content-based instruction, greater global internationalisation and demand for ESL teaching, and increased enrolment and awareness of ESL students at art and design schools and university art programs in the United States and at English-medium schools in other countries. Within the context of these new course models, opportunities to incorporate study tours for students at a lower English proficiency have emerged.

For content-based courses, Raphan and Moser (1993/94) describe a content-based course which acts as preparation for a required course in the history of art at Brooklyn College. For the course, they focus on authentic textbook reading, academic language development activities, and learning strategy instruction. Tillyer (1995), who teaches this class at the City University of New York, schedules one visit to art institutions in New York for every twelve class hours.

Meanwhile, at Temple University in Philadelphia, Preece (1994, 1993) also approached art, ESL, and study abroad tours in his course, *Art English*, which acts as a precourse to *Visual Experience*. The course has a dual function: to prepare students for an art appreciation course that can be taken to fulfil a distribution requirement for the Bachelor of Arts degree at Temple University, and it provides a study abroad experience / artistic introduction to Philadelphia (also, see Preece 1996, and Preece with Tomlinson 1995). Also, the course has since been modified to include the ESP needs of future art students at Temple's Tyler School of Art, when the needs of the two student groups (content-based and ESP) meet. Unlike the preparatory course which stresses history and style as described by Raphan and Moser (1993/94), Preece's course (1994, 1993) stresses the acquisition of the language involving the visual elements and the principles of design as demonstrated in Gilbert (1995) with reference to an art history study guide written by Jansen (1986), which can act as a rhetorical analysis of art history classroom objectives. From his findings, Preece (1994) determined that the elements and principles, applicable to all works of art and architecture, offer a language that can be practised by students in a relatively short period of time, and can incorporate a wide variety of tours, composition objectives, and oral presentation skills.

In addition, Salij (1994) describes a content-based course entitled *Art and Communication* for beginning students of drawing and English as part

of an intensive English language program in Japan. The course combines developing artistic expression and listening comprehension skills. While Salij does not describe a tour component in the article, it is quite possible to utilise the language of drawing into a tour, and after tour activities, have students sketch works of art and architecture.

Option 4: Segments within existing ESL classes

Segments in existing courses that emphasise local art and architecture tours can be created that approach the subject matter, applications of elements and principles, style, and historical context of the work. Kirn & Hartmann (1990) and other EAP textbooks authors provide chapters with art topics that can be used as a means to bring in art tours and specific art language. Further, Shier (1990) describes techniques for integrating art into the K-12 second/foreign language curricula, which can be relevant for the college-level language classroom. Lastly, Preece with Tomlinson (1995) of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, developed tour packets which have a dual purpose for ESL students at Temple University: They directly relate to Temple's content-based course, *Art English* (Preece 1994); and offer a content-based cultural segment for students in other courses.

Option 5: Expanding tour opportunities with design

In addition to art and architecture, bringing design (interior, graphic, industrial/product, fashion, photographic, etc.) into the visual arts course expands opportunities for tours dramatically. For content, Bevlin (1995) offers a textbook that includes the elements and principles and is comparable to textbooks used for the course *Visual Experience*, although design is the focus of the text. Within a more design-oriented framework, the Moore College of Art and Design in Philadelphia offers a ten-day study tour which included stops at sites that usually don't fit into an art and architecture syllabi: trips to shopping centres, eating establishments, aquariums, and movie theatres are included. The set-up is as follows: an introduction to the site and an activity related to the visual arts (e.g. architectural design, function, interior design, logos, packaging, etc.) followed by traditional sightseeing activities.

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§4 The tours

A. Setting up the tour

Guidebooks for foreign tourists include maps and information about places to stay, transportation, safety, and basic historical information. They also include important sites to visit which provide a framework for the visitor's tour. Students travelling abroad use these texts as an overall introduction to their study abroad experience and refer to them often.

Tours need not be restricted to museums. Alternatively, university campuses often have public sculpture and university galleries. Coffee-houses in cities and near universities sometimes display art. Local newspapers usually have an arts section which lists all sorts of cultural happenings and exhibitions, and local architecture and historical societies sometimes have materials for walking tours. Sometimes they even offer guided tours. Further, from a design perspective, a variety of other options become available.

The following suggestions are offered to incorporate local art and architecture tours: choosing sites for tours, conducting a museum/gallery tour, and conducting an architecture tour. In the appendix, practical tips for tours are provided.

B. Selecting tours

Sites can be chosen by you, or can be part of a student project. The following suggestions are offered:

i. Create a list of art and architecture sights using a guide book, your visual arts department, local tourism offices, and/or the arts section in your local newspaper.

ii. Create a list of secondary sights that are easier for you and your group to visit, provide a more comfortable environment for second language practice (less crowded places), or fit in a theme you might create (e.g. Public sculpture in Fairmont Park).

iii. Consider sites that are opportunities to discuss design, and possibly also incorporate tourist-oriented needs: coffee shops, restaurants, shopping.

iv. Call institutions and the travel office covering your area to find out about existing tours and educational materials in English and other languages, and group admission costs and requirements. Sometimes students can attend at a discounted cost or free of charge with a student identification card.

v. For guides, find out what previous experience they have had with English as a Second Language learners. What experiences have they had with a Limited English Proficiency group?

Usually, the guide's experience will determine the extent to which utilising existing resources will work smoothly. For low-advanced and intermediates, a tour in which less than half is understood can be a discouraging and exhausting experience for the students and tour guide alike. Although developing pre-visit activities can give students a structure to guide them through the experience, making an arrangement with a guide who is sincerely interested in your students and would see this as a long-term investment can be a rewarding experience. Further, they may be interested in working with you to create a specialised tour as in the case of Preece with Tomlinson (1995).

vi. After determining sights and logistics, develop a fluid connection to the course and incorporate it into the syllabus.

C. Museum/Gallery tour

While having a member of the museum or gallery staff give a tour for your students may be ideal, sometimes this isn't possible, or it is linguistically challenging for your students and the guide. In this case, you may need to give the tour yourself.

Tours can be modified in several ways to make the experience comprehensible. For pre-visit materials, you can adapt existing educational and tour materials and introduce specific works that will be visited. Also, Luce (1976) describes pre-visit activities for second language learners for interacting with a tour guide. These activities include predicting the events of the tour, preparing questions related to the objectives of the tour, and preparing questions that address individual interests related to the sites.

For the tour itself, existing tour guide notes and materials can be modified into an accessible language level and act as a listening activity in which the content is reviewed. However, tour information is usually overburdened with historical information that makes the experience largely passive for students. Instead, by focusing on subject matter description, elements, principles, and criticism, the tour can be an experience whereby students are active participants in gathering information.

Within this context, tours of art museums/exhibition spaces, within the *Visual Experience* class model, can follow this format:

i. (In front of the building) Give a small presentation about the exhibition space as a work of architecture and a brief history. Information can be obtained from a brochure.

ii. (Inside) Present 3-5 works. For each work, I give a small oral presentation with non-verbal gestures that focuses on subject matter, and I review concepts and language previously discussed in class. Then, I provide some basic historical information. This can function as a group discussion or lecture-listening exercise.

iii. After the presentation, students are asked comprehension questions which request a couple of sentences of information (e.g. How did this artist create a strong focal point?).

iv. After the presentations, students are divided into pairs or small groups and select 2-3 works that catch their eye. For each work, they must answer a series of questions which ask them to develop topic sentences, and support these with visual evidence, comment about the work, and make inferences about the artist's objectives. One student takes notes and has the responsibility of team reporter. This forms the basis for a follow-up activity.

v. As identified by museum personnel, students can locate the ten most popular or art historically significant works in the museum. You can provide a standard sheet which request information about subject matter and other information.

vi. Students then go to the museum shop to purchase postcards of the works that they have selected for use in a follow-up activity.

D. Architecture Tour

For tours of architecture:

i. / ii. / iii.
You can use the same format as in the museum/gallery tour, except focus on the different parts of one building (exterior, interior, front, back) or the exteriors of a few buildings. If it's easier, architectural surfaces can be approached like a two-dimensional painting.

iv. Students select 2-3 aspects of one building or 2-3 buildings.

v. Students take photographs, slides, or draw sketches for a follow-up activity.

E. Post-tour activities for art and architecture tours

Students present and/or discuss their selections with other classmates in small groups.

§5 Summary

Art and architecture tours, commonly incorporated into coursework at English-medium European study abroad programs for Americans, can be integrated into ESL programs using various models of content-based instruction. These tours can provide opportunities to take students out of the classroom and into the environment that is the object of study. Within an ESL programming framework, courses can be both communicative and academic, can address tourist-oriented needs, enrich visual arts content-based courses, and provide content-based cultural segments. These tours also provides students with a wider variety of study abroad experiences to reflect upon, to share, and to learn more from the studied environment.

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Appendix: Additional Tips for Tours

a. Visit the site first to gather information about the site and the art it contains.

b. Sometimes museums, galleries, and architecture associations offer slides and written materials as part of a pre-visit materials package. Also, many museums have one-page write-ups of particular works which can be useful.

c. Check with your art / art history department about slides that can be lent out to other departments. Sometimes, these departments will make copies of slides at a minimal charge.

d. In class, tell the students that, in the US, they cannot touch the work of art and should stand away from it. In some countries, people are allowed to touch sculpture and paintings in museums. Also, don't let them use a pen or pencil to point at the picture. The guards will get very nervous.

e. When you are giving a presentation, try to limit your groups to 10-15 students. With larger groups, it's often difficult for students to see the work and hear what you are saying. If your group is larger, after an introduction to the site, you can divide the group and have some students do their activity or homework first. Also, for architecture tours, size is a greater concern due to increased street noise, particularly in urban areas.

f. It's difficult to supervise the language usage of student groups when they are scattered around a museum. By selected student for groups with different first language backgrounds, it will help monitor the situation.

g. Try to go to the site during a slow time or to parts of the museum that are less crowded. In crowds, you may be hesitant to give a presentation about an artwork and your students may be hesitant to do the same.

h. When planning to use postcard for follow-up activities, it's important to check in the museum shop to see that they actually have the postcard in stock before students invest the time into analysing a work.

i. Try to limit your tours to one/two sites per day. Seeing too many sites can be exhausting for students and teachers alike.

j. Break up two tours or end a tour with lunch or a short trip to a coffee shop. Sometimes, urban coffee shops themselves display art.

k. Schwartz (1986) includes additional tips for tours.

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